



**Workington Towns Deal Board Meeting  
Friday 11 September 2020  
Draft Minutes**

Attendance

Board Members

Cllr Alan Barry	Cumbria County Council
Chris Bagshaw	Workington Town Council
John Coughlan (Chair)	TSP Engineering Ltd
Jack Gordon	Sovereign Centros
Valerie Hallard	Churches Together in Workington
Cllr Michael Heaslip	Allerdale Borough Council
Mark Jenkinson MP (Part)	MP for Workington
Bridget Johns	Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service
Cllr Mike Johnson	Allerdale Borough Council
Chris Natrass	Lakes College
Cllr Paul Scott	Allerdale Borough Council
David Taylor	Allerdale Investment Partnership
Anthony Wareing	Workington Heritage Group
Corinne Watson	Cumbria LEP

Officers/Support

Julie Alexander	Allerdale Borough Council
Michael Barry	Cumbria County Council
Ashley Bennett	Mott MacDonald
Tom Burton	Savills
Sarah Brown	SQW
Luke Delahunty	SQW
Rosie Jenkins	CLGU
Kevin Kerrigan	Allerdale Borough Council
Martin Kirkpatrick	Buttress Architects
Chithra Marsh	Buttress Architects
Christopher Nils-Shaw	Buttress Architects
Tom Nuttall	Sovereign Centros
Lizzy Shaw	Cumbria County Council
Oliver Steele	Mott MacDonald

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Urban regeneration, planning and land use; Skills and enterprise infrastructure; and connectivity

1. Introductions

The Chair welcomed all Board Members and their supporting officers to the meeting.

Apologies

Jonny Lowe

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Actions

The board agreed the minutes of the last meeting.

3. Update on Town Investment Plan Narrative

Mott Macdonald (MM) presented the draft Town Investment Plan (TIP), focussing on the evidence base and strategic narrative. It had been previously circulated to board members, and its format reflects government guidance. The TIP aims to highlight the distinctiveness of Workington, showing how the baseline position and context informs the overarching vision and strategic objectives, and guides the subsequent identification of the priority actions areas. The Strategic narrative is seeking to set out why and how the board has arrived at the project interventions selected.

Suggestions by board members included further narrative on the historical perspective of Workington and the loss of coal, steel and fishing, and more on the theory of change. The importance of connectivity in maintaining and improving the vibrancy and effectiveness of Workington Town Centre was also raised. Any further comments on these sections should be submitted before the next meeting.

Presentation Slides used for this and the following items will be circulated after the meeting.

4. Update on Priority Projects

Members were updated on each of the priority projects. Initial estimated costs for each scheme were included.

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- *Port of Workington and Clean Energy Hub*

Michael Barry (CCC) summarised this project which seeks to capitalise on the area around the port as a centre for growth, involving site preparation works to create serviced development land for logistics and clean energy. The project builds on Workington's logistics and energy sector, will increase the diversity of Workington's employment base, and support the wider ambitions of freeports and opportunities for offshore renewable energy.

Some discussion followed about the potential of the port as a cruise destination. The port masterplan outlines a range of ancillary activity that could be supported, and whilst this use is not discounted as part of a wider strategy, it does not form part of the TIP.

- *Innovation Centre and Co-Working Space*

SQW and Savills set out the rationale for the Workington Enterprise Campus which involves the provision of incubation space, grow on expansion space, incorporating an anchor tenant, co-working space and a café/bar/events area. A high quality, energy efficient 4000 square metre facility has been modelled with onsite parking. Central carpark has been identified by the Council as the preferred site. This is a large site, and the enterprise campus would only occupy a small part of it; a broader vision and further masterplanning is necessary. It was highlighted that the facility will need to generate sufficient rental income to cross subsidize the incubation and entrepreneurship strands of activity, and an anchor tenant would provide some financial stability, but the construction of the campus and its operating costs would be at a loss to begin with. It was assumed that the rest of the site would be residential in order to cross subsidise the campus, but this has proved marginal. Outlining the financial appraisal, a significant viability gap remains with £6m – £9m grant funding needed to progress this scheme.

Members discussed alternative forms of housing and profitability. Concerns were expressed about the potential impact of the meeting space and restaurant on the town centre and existing venues. It was confirmed that these facilities are integral to the scheme and would be expected by

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the calibre of tenants that the campus seeks to attract. It is anticipated that town centre cafes and businesses would ultimately benefit from the establishment of the campus. The location was also queried, with a suggestion that the Opera House site would be more suitable for such commercial development. David Taylor (AIP). Chris Nattrass (Lakes college) considered that the campus could present the opportunity to integrate with a digital skills hub offering access to reskilling, training, and digital literacy.

- *Digital Skills Programme*

Corinne Watson supported by Chris Nattrass outlined the skills hub. There is currently a deficit of higher-level skills within the district, and digital skills are crucial to economic growth, with demand for advanced digital skills increasing. This project seeks to build on and enhance the existing education and skills facilities and support available, taking a holistic approach to digital skills – technological, sociological and cognitive. Applications of digital technology are diverse, including AI, manufacturing, 3D Construction, modular construction, visitor economy, and health and social care. The project matches existing resources, support and assets to needs in a hub. It could involve part time access to facilities for SME, for example, to encourage them to grow their businesses, or by making the Virtual reality suite available to employers, business and individuals.

- *Opera House*

This site had been considered as potentially suitable as public open space, but further assessment by Buttress identified limitations to this approach. It is recognised that a temporary ‘meanwhile’ use will need to be established following acquisition and clearance using the accelerated funding. One such use would be for shipping containers to provide space for fledgling businesses, creating more space and activity in the town centre in the short term. The site could also accommodate the market. Martin Kirkpatrick of Buttress highlighted the connectivity of this site, and the potential to enhance it and make it a destination, whilst in the longer-term additional units on Pow Street could be acquired, enabling comprehensive site redevelopment. Disappointment was expressed by some board members about the lack of open space/green space in the town centre, with the view that even as a meanwhile use this site could

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offer some attractive green open space and host events. Concern was also expressed about the appearance of the shipping containers. Buttress confirmed that the orientation and shadowing created by adjoining buildings would leave the site in shade for much of the time, and nor would it be overlooked, indicating that it might not be so well used as public open space. Nevertheless, there is flexibility and scope for some open space on the site. Buttress also assured members that projects had demonstrated that high quality attractive places could be created from shipping containers.

- *Workington Sports Village*

Kevin Kerrigan gave an overview of the Workington sports village project which involves the shared stadium, a new sports pitch and community facilities, and opportunities for informal riverside recreation. It is also intended that improvements will be made to existing playing pitches at Moorclose to provide a satellite facility. The project aligns with the intervention framework, and the scheme will also enable the release of the rugby club for housing or commercial development.

- *Townscape and Connectivity*

Martin Kirkpatrick of Buttress explained how this project brought elements of the other schemes together into a cohesive town plan, making connections and improvements between the sports village, town centre and station. A Riverside walk is envisaged as part of the scheme, encouraging walking and access to green space, in addition to public realm improvements which contribute to placemaking and supporting active travel. One proposal involved improvements to Washington Street, and the removal of some of the railings.

MM confirmed that these were not the final solutions, but more a sense of the corridors identified, and high-level costings. This project has important implications for the Highways Authority. There is a need to secure details sufficient for the bid, but with flexibility to enable further discussions to take place on the specifics afterwards.

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The approach was felt to be positive, although there were comments about how the railings on Washington street supported Workington Town Council's floral displays, and alternative solutions to accommodate them would need to be incorporated in any scheme. There were also references to lighting, banners and Christmas lights infrastructure, and the inclusion of fingerposts and heritage boards. Other suggestions included directing pedestrians and cyclists along Church Street and via the leisure centre to the town centre, which was felt to be a more attractive route, and that the scheme should be extended to Workington Hall.

In total the current project ask of the Towns Fund exceeds £25 million. MM reminded the group that if the bid exceeds this threshold, it would receive greater scrutiny and require greater technical input. Whilst the concepts outlined were good, they were insufficient to meet the criteria for higher level funding, and scaling back the projects, or elements of the projects, was recommended. Rosie Jenkins of CLGU confirmed that bids in excess of £25 million were expected to include schemes of regional or national importance, and deliver wider economic benefits.

The need for realism and challenge in prioritising the projects was acknowledged. There was some agreement that the costs associated with townscape and connectivity were too high, and this scheme could be scaled back. Prioritisation was discussed in terms of impact of each project, and whether they were worth the funding. However, it was also agreed that the public consultation should carry some weight in the prioritisation of projects. The bid will need to demonstrate how community engagement has been utilised and acted on. There was a range of opinions as to whether to exceed the £25 million threshold, but also concern that the townscape/connectivity project would be diminished, when this scheme was crucial to the continuing viability of the town centre.

#### 5. *Update on Community Engagement*

Kevin Kerrigan provided an update on the progress of community engagement. This will be progress now there is greater clarity in relation to the priority projects and the broad support of the Board for these. Discussions about the draft stakeholder engagement plan are proposed with the Towns Fund stakeholder engagement lead for the north. The questions for the online survey are currently being refined to reflect the nature of the projects and will be promoted digitally on the Council's website and social media, and by all

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partners. There will also be some non-digital material available which will include the display of posters in strategic locations within the town. 3 weeks have been allocated for community engagement work.

6. Update on Programme

The second cohort of Towns Fund applications is due at the end of October, and the three weeks of community engagement is envisaged to commence at the end of September. There is little time for slippage or further options development work.

7. AOB

The Chair and members of the board thanked Chris Bagshaw for his time and input into the town bid as he departs for a new role. The Chair also thanked the group for its positive efforts to date. A significant amount of work is still needed in a short space of time, and therefore it is essential to maintain momentum to meet the submission date.

8. Future Meetings

Next Board meeting – Friday 02 October 2020 – 2:30 pm, to be held remotely. Board members will be updated accordingly.

The meeting ended at 4:50 pm